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SUBJECT: AU SUMMIT: AF ACTING A/S CARTER MEETS WITH AU
COMMISSIONER JEAN PING

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: At a January 31 meeting on the margins of the African Union Summit, African Union Commission Chairperson Jean Ping and Acting A/S for African Affairs Phillip Carter exchanged views about the major political crises in Africa. They agreed that the international community must remain unified in its call for the restoration of constitutional order in Mauritania and Guinea. They shared the view that there has been unprecedented military cooperation between the DRC and Rwanda and that this has given hope for stability in the DRC, although political dialogue is still needed. Donor support for AMISOM, the election of a new president, and gains by moderate Islamist forces give reason for some optimism in Somalia. There was a divergence of views on Sudan, with Ping advocating deferral of the International Criminal Court's investigation of President Bashir to give the Sudanese government more time to cooperate with the AU, s newly appointed high-level panel charged with finding a Sudanese mechanism for judging individuals accused of genocide. Likewise, Ping wants to give Zimbabwe's political rivals six months to implement their shared-power agreement. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Mauritania and Guinea: Carter thanked the AU for taking a principled stand against the coups d'etat in Mauritania and Guinea. He said coups can spread to other African states like a virus. Ping was grateful to the USG for being the only Western partner to maintain its unwavering position against coups. The USG stands on its principles while the EU puts its interests first, he said. The AU Commission knew the coup in Mauritania could spawn coups elsewhere in Africa, such as the one in Guinea and the attempted coup in Guinea-Bissau. "It is a very bad precedent," Ping said, warning that Africa was heading "back to the era of coups d'etat." Both sides lamented Senegal, s recognition of the coup leaders and pledged to continue working together, and with the rest of the international community, to pressure the junta into agreeing to hold elections and cede power quickly.

¶3. (C) Carter offered a bleak assessment of the Guinean junta. They are "hoodlums" who are associated with drug traffickers. Even under the late President Conte, Guinea was "on the road to becoming a narco-state," Carter said. The new Finance Minister is a captain who is barely numerate. Guinea has missed its World Bank payments since the junta took over. Despite these negative trends, the AU and ECOWAS can help Guinea hold credible elections and create an effective legislature, and Guinean civil society

also needs to take a leadership role, Carter added. Ping reported that the AU had decided to create a consultative group of regional and international partners to address the Guinean problem. That group will hold its first meeting on February 16 in Conakry.

14. (C) DRC: Carter and Ping briefly reviewed the various diplomatic efforts to stabilize the political situation in the DRC, including Ping's own meetings with DRC and Rwandan leaders, but also the interventions of AU and UN mediators Mkapa and Obasanjo. The recent military collaboration between Rwanda and the DRC was noteworthy in that some in the region did not believe it could happen. Carter and Ping agreed that the political process needed to be encouraged in Eastern Congo. A cessation of military hostilities will create the security environment that will permit a political dialogue, Carter said. Ping saw that this could have a stabilizing effect on neighboring Burundi.

15. (C) Somalia: Ping thanked the USG for its support of AMISOM. Without donor contributions to AMISOM, Somalia will collapse, he warned. Thus far, donor pledges have reassured Troop Contributing Countries Burundi and Uganda. Nigeria could send up to three battalions, but it needs financial assistance and it wants one of its commanders to head AMISOM. Ping has approached both Ghana and Burkina Faso about contributing troops. Ghana's new president appears to be more interested than his predecessor. Ping urged Burkina Faso to consider sending one of the three battalions destined to deploy in Darfur to AMISOM instead,

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although he recognized that UNAMID pays better. Ethiopia's withdrawal from Somalia has helped persuade the Arab League and individual Arab states, including Egypt and Yemen, to contribute to AMISOM and the 10,000-man joint TFG/ARS security forces, Ping noted. Algeria has agreed to provide airlift to Burundian and Ugandan troops in February. Ping and Carter agreed that the advent of moderate Islamists, such as newly elected Somali President Sheikh Sharif, was cause for optimism.

16. (C) Sudan: There was a divergence of views on resolving the crisis in Sudan. Ping began by reporting that the AU's Executive Committee (ministerial-level body) had taken a firm stand against the International Criminal Court's Darfur investigation at the conclusion of its January 30 session. For the AU, the ICC's pursuit of Sudanese President Bashir illustrates the Court's bias against Africa. "It is very difficult to accept that all these things are targeting only Africans," Ping said. "We should fight impunity. Absolutely." The AU, however, insists that the Sudanese themselves should prosecute and judge fellow Sudanese accused of genocide, Ping added. To promote this approach with the Sudanese, the AU has created a high-level panel headed by former South African President Thabo Mbeki, and it is asking for a one-year deferral of the anticipated ICC arrest warrant against President Bashir to give peace a chance. If the ICC issues its arrest warrant, "you can forget everything," including Government of Sudan cooperation with the UNAMID deployment and peace talks, Ping said, throwing up his hands. He raised the spectre of terror groups returning to Sudan. Both Carter and Ping have urged the GOS not to overreact to the ICC warrant as that will only complicate the situation.

17. (C) Carter told Ping that the USG does not support a deferral of the ICC's pending arrest warrant. Since the indictment was announced last July, the GOS has done very little, despite USG pressure on the government, Carter said. There is no reason to believe the GOS will cooperate with the international community if the ICC decision is deferred. "They have had one, two, three, 100 chances to do the right thing," Carter said. The GOS is at least in part to blame for the UNAMID deployment falling behind

schedule.

¶8. (C) Zimbabwe: Sudan, like Zimbabwe, does not present attractive options, Ping said. "We know Mugabe should go," he confided. Some AU member states would even support a military option to remove Mugabe from power. But he cautioned that the military option in another country, the DRC, has left 5 million dead over 15 years, and there is still no change. "Mugabe will fight. It's a similar situation to Congo." Ping predicted that trying to force out Mugabe by force would ignite a fire in the region, which is why the AU prefers to give Zimbabweans six more months to try to resolve their crisis. Carter said the USG sees the crisis in Zimbabwe differently. The Southern African Development Community has not exhibited effective leadership nor was former South African president Thabo Mbeki an effective mediator. Ping agreed fully with Carter's views. With last week's agreement between Mugabe's ZANU-PF and Tsvangirai's MDC, the focus shifts from Pretoria (and SADC's role as mediator) to Harare where all parties will be held accountable. The international community, the UN, and SADC need to remain vigilant, Carter said.

¶9. (C) Tsvangirai should be given the opportunity to demonstrate to Zimbabweans his capability to govern, Ping said. If after six months there is no change, then it will be clear to the South Africans, as the influential leaders of SADC, that another approach must be taken, he added. Carter said he was not convinced that Mugabe would let Tsvangirai govern.

¶10. (C) AU Presidency: Carter inquired about who Ping thought the next AU President would be. Ping offered four scenarios: (1) It is North Africa's turn and Libya's Qadhafi has been mentioned, but he is reportedly reluctant to accept it; (2) Another North African country is a possibility, but the Egyptian and Tunisian presidents do not attend AU Summits, the Algerian president is

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preoccupied with re-election, and Mauritania has been suspended from the AU after the coup there; (3) The incumbent AU President Kikwete could agree to serve another one-year term, but when Qadhafi asked him, he reportedly refused as he, too, is preoccupied with elections in Tanzania; (4) The presidency rotates next to southern Africa, and Lesotho has been rumored to be interested. The AU heads of state will hold an election on February 2.

¶11. (C) COMMENT: The meeting ended with Ping asserting that Africa "is readier than ever to cooperate" with the United States. However, Ping's tone and tenor reflected a sense of defensiveness towards Western approaches to Africa's troubles. His frustration, even pique, towards Europe and the EU were palpable. What was also apparent is Ping's apparent unwillingness to take a greater leadership role for himself on many of these matters, leaving much of the heavy lifting and political cover to the AU's Peace and Security Commission. END COMMENT.

¶12. (U) Acting A/S Carter approved this message before departing Addis.

YAMAMOTO